Project I.D. No. 7

NAME: Yamamoto, ~~Zentaso~~ ZENTARO DATE OF BIRTH: 8/1/1886 PLACE OF BIRTH: Wakayama
Age: 84 Sex: M Marital Status: M (?) Education: High Elementary School

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1907 Age: 21 M.S. S Port of entry: Juares, Mex.
Occupation/s: 1. Railroad Worker 2. Farmer 3. _____
Place of residence: 1. Sacramento, Ca. 2. San Mateo, Ca. 3. Watsonville, Ca.
Religious affiliation: Christian Church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Salinas (?)
Name of relocation center: Poston, Arizona
Dispensation of property: _____ Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. _____ 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Watsonville, California

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: _____
Address/es: 1. Watsonville, California 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian Church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Sumio Koga Date: 12/22/70 Place: Watsonville, Ca.
Translator: Kusunoki

NAME: MR. ZENTARO YAMAMOTO

AGE: 88 YEARS

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 1st, YEAR OF MEIJI 15 (1886)

BIRTH PLACE: HIGASHI-MURO, WAKAYAMA-KEN

WHAT YEAR AND AGE WHEN CAME TO U.S.: 1907; 21 YEARS

MAJOR OCCUPATION: FARM WORK

RELOCATION CAMP: ~~BOSTON~~ (POSTON?)

NAME: MR. ZENTASO YAMAMOTO

Q: Where were you born?

A: In Higashi-muro, Wakayama-ken.

Q: When were you born?

A: Born on August 1st in Meiji 15, that's 1886.

Q: Do you remember anything about the wars?

A: I remember the days of Sino-Japanese War, because Japan won it. Other than that I don't quite remember. Well, Russo-Japanese War. On this war I thought Japan would be defeated, because their country is bigger than ours. But, again, Japan won it, too.

Q: Were you, at that time, in Japan, or in the U.S.?

A: I was in Japan.

Q: How about World War I?

A; Nothing I remember.

Q: Then, how about Manshū Jihan?

A: Nothing in detail.

Q: Do you remember any events like tsunami, earthquakes, plagues? How about happy events, sad events, things you suffered?

A: I don't remember any happy events in particular.

Q: Religion of family?

A: Buddhism.

Q: Did you hear anything about Christianity in Japan?

A: No, I didn't, for I was in the country.

Q: How was the condition of your family when you left Japan? Society?

A: I came over here in 1907.

Q: Did you have your parents, brothers and sisters living together with you then?

A: Two brothers, a younger sister, and myself. I was the eldest son.

Q: Was your family happy to send you out?

A: Well, I'm kind of a guy who pursues what he wants. (Or,"I'm kind of a guy who keeps on going once he makes a start.") I made up my mind on this a long time ago. See, I'm the first son of the family, and in Japan he has to succeed his family.

Q: How were the social conditions in general, then?

A: Few people went abroad, I guess.

Q: How much formal education did you have?

A: There was Jinjō (regular) elementary school, and then, Kōtō (high) elementary school. I finished them, then came over here.

Q: What was the reason why you came over to the U.S.A.?

A: From my hometown, Kobayashi-mura, five of us came, so I came over together with them. People told me to buy an insurance, see. I'm small as I am. I had, well, a hundred yen (100) with me, then. Parents of in-laws kept insisting that I buy an insurance. So, I went to see a doctor who issues (?). But I did not pass the

A: exam. He said, "You won't be able to do a hard labor in the U.S." A friend of mine then persuaded the doctor, "All right, doc, make it your secret. He passed it." Well, it was a lie.

Q: What was your major concern in your mind, studying, or making money, or what?

A: Well, I guess, making money. See, I'm the first son, so I wanted to go back soon after making money.

Q: When did you leave Japan?

A: It was in 1907.

Q: Did you take a Hawaii route?

A: No. I didn't go through Hawaii. Instead I went to Mexico first.

Q: Then, you don't have any memories of Hawaii?

A: Right. I have stayed there over night one time on the way back to Japan.

Q: What kind of people were on the ship?

A: What kind of people? Well, about twenty (20) of us were on the ship -- the same sort of guys.

Q: What kind of ship?

A: The first trip here, I left Japan for Mexico . . .

Q: A Japanese ship?

A: Ya, it was a Japanese ship.

Q: Do you remember the name of it?

A: No, I don't recall.

Q: Do you remember anything which happened on the ship?

A: Nothing in particular. The same kind of guys, while on

A: boat, talking, having fun . . .

Q: What was your expectation of America?

A: I remember pepple saying that America is a good country, good for making money. I came over thinking about nothing but that business.

Q: What were you planning to do?

A: Nothing in particular, really . . .

Q: Just wanted to work?

A: Ya, I wanted to work.

Q: What was your first impression of America?

A: The rumor had it right. This <u>is</u> a great country, I thought when I saw buildings.

Q: How did immigration officer(s) treat you?

A: Immigration officers -- when I was coming . . . From Mexico, Juares, that is -- there is a town near the border, isn't there? Over this side of the border was another one -- they called it something -- there were two towns, and I crossed the bridge.

Q: What did you do when you landed in America for the first time? Jobs?

A: I worked on the railroad construction.

Q: How did white people treat you?

A: They -- well, at any rate -- they did not respect us Japanese. Didn't pay us any respect.

Q: Memories concerning various situations -- happy experiences, sad experiences, funny ones, bad ones, frightening ones, helpless ones . . .

A: Ya, I have some. Five of us came. Then, I, alone, headed for Sacramento. There (?), helped me find a job. Railroad work that was. Then, (?), and also around (?), I worked in those places, working on railroad. Those bad buys were just drinking and drinking. Drinking and gambling. I didn't drink a bit, and one time I remember crying, you know, on a mountain over (?).

Q: How did you find your bride?

A: I was over here. (?)

Q: You mean, the bride's brother introduced her to you?

A: It wasn't quite a formal introduction or anything. (?)

Q: Was that through pictures?

A: I went back to Japan to bring my wife with me in 1922.

Q: So, you married in Japan?

A: Right, in Japan.

Q: What kind of wedding ceremony?

A: It was in a Japanese style.

Q: Have you ever been home sick?

A: I used to before I got married. I used to think that I shouldn't have come here.

Q: What kind of hardship did you have in order to get used to the American way of life?

A: Well, let me see. I can't recall any hardships.

Q: Have you ever been discriminated? Have you been physically harmed?

A: I have, to be sure. The people in deep San Mateo, when I was working way back in a remote, isolated site. It used to take us a little more than an hour -- since on foot -- to get to San Mateo, for shopping. Then kids would come around saying, "Jap! Jap!" Sure, Jap. Jap. We were Jap in those days. Once in a while they would throw stones at me. Well, I would throw some back at them.

Q: Have you been in school in the U.S.?

A: No, not a single one.

Q: How did you learn English?

A: By listening. (By ears? by air?!--Toshi)

Q: How much income did you have in the first few years?

A: There wasn't any work, so I raised strawberries. Worked everyday. Let's see, how much I was making at that time. Around twenty-five cents (25¢), I suppose. That's an hour.

Q: When did you buy house? How much? Where? Did you have any difficulties in buying it?

A: Nineteen . . . I bought it after the war.

Q: How much was it?

A: There wasn't a house, none of this, I built everything. When we moved into this neighborhood, we were the only ones. Streets were narrow. After we moved in, then gradually houses, and sub-houses (or, fields) began to be seen around here.

Q: Did you buy any land?

A: Ya, when I came out here.

Q: How much was it?

A: Seven thousand yen ($7,000), I think.

Q: What did you buy that for?

A: To raise strawberries.

Q: Japanese organizations like JACL, kenjinkai, churches, Japanese council, farm organizations, helped you in any way?

A: Well, not really.

Q: JACL did help Japanese to some degree, didn't it?

A: Through JACL we Japanese received some help in financial matters. (or, "Since we Japanese people had JACL, we gave some financial back up.")

Q: Did they, as a group, help you any?

A: No, I wasn't helped, not through JACL.

Q: What kind of entertainment, hobbies, and other things did you enjoy?

A: Playing pool in those days.

Q: What do you remember about rearing children?

A: Ya, a lot of hard times I remember. My wife -- since I was going to America to work afterall --- a physically well-fit me -- got to be working, you see -- well-built one -- I looked after two (2) women. And my wife was better in that respect.

Q: Did you send your children back to Japan?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: What kind of contributions did you make during the World War I?

A: Not really.

Q: _____

A: Not quite.

Q: When did you come in contact with Christianity?

A: I was baptized in 1916, I guess.

Q: Why Christianity?

A: There was a Suzuki of Shizuoka-ken living here. He was a teacher back in Japan. A real good friend of mine. He would invite me to a church. He sort of helped me decide to go to church. Then in Monterey, like (?) I did house work, day-work. This guy Suzuki took a real good care of me, and he was living in a small rented house just like myself. Those day, I remember, I used to go to church all the time.

Q: What kind of hardship did you experience?

A: I don't remember.

Q: When did you decide to stay here permanently?

A: This big one . . . At any rate, after the first son was born. Well, over forty (40) years (?)

Q: What kind of attitude did whites have towards Japanese?

A: _____

Q: When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, what did you think first of all? How did you feel?

A: That Pearl Harbor attack. Coming all the way from

A: Japan. At the time the Japanese people were -- Japanese -- in any case, they used to say in Japan that ---. In Japan -- in regard to wars -- they won it against China, and also against Korea; Japanese are great, simply great. Japanese people had somewhat this sort of mentality, which I for one had.

Q: How did you come to know the Notice of Relocation?

A: On eviction day? I think I was doing my day work in the strawberry fields.

Q: When you got to know about evacuation, how did you feel about the coming event?

A: A war against America, right? I felt lonely ( ).

Q: How did you go to Assembly Center and Relocation Camp?

A: From here I went to ( ); what did they call that there? Folks around here all went to a camp.

Q: You mean to ( ) in Salinas?

A: That's right.

Q: How did you white friends feel about this?

A: I didn't have any white friends.

Q: How did you take care of your house, possessions and business?

A: At the time -- an eviction -- our eldest son was in Germany. (? name) was in Japan. Around that same time I got married to my present wife. So both of us were badly feeling lonely. Two sons were out for the war. Fortunately, both come back in a good condition, so . . .

Q: Which Assembly Center and Relocation Camp did you go?

A: To the camp in Boston. (sic)

Q: What was the condition of the Centers?

A: Very good, because we had nothing to worry about.

Q: What kind of events took place there?

A: I don't remember any events as such. Day after day, (?), making a big fuss out of nothing. We idled.

Q: What did you think about the problem of loyalty?

A: Nothing particularly.

Q: How did you feel as Japanese, when you were put in the Concentration Camp?

A: Certainly I felt lonely. Everyone of us Japanese got evicted, and sent to Boston. (sic)

Q: How did you think about Nisei volunteering for Army?

A: I was quite displeased, putting parents in a concentration camps while sending their kids to the battle fields.

Q: What kind of entertainments, hobbies, and enjoyments did you have in the camp?

A: Nothing, particularly.

Q: What kind of job did you have in the camp?

A: We didn't have any work to do, really.

Q: How was your religious life there? Did you go to church?

A: There was a minister, whose name I don't recall, so I didn't miss a Sunday there.

Q: What did you think about the problem of education of

Q: your children in the camp?

A: Well, you say education, but they all had gone for the war, so nothing left.

Q: What kind of meaningful things do you remember in the camp?

A: (?) (I stayed there till the end of the war). American thinking was just as big (or huge, wide, gigantic etc.) as the country itself, I thought. They took a good care of us.

Q: Did your faith change during the camp period?

A: Didn't change much. Every Sunday I . . . I forgot the minister's name, though . . .

Q: When did you leave the camp?

A: When could that be? At that time I was feeling pretty lonely, when we were coming back here. How can we live from now on? I was afraid that we might, since Japanese got defeated, be segregated against by the whites. I was thinking things of that nature.

Q: Where did you stay upon returning to Watsonville?

A: Where could it be? I spent sometime at a church.

Q: What kind of job did you have?

A: Since I was at (?) in Salinas, I worked in lettuce (fields ??).

Q: Did white churches take care of you?

A: I don't quite remember.

Q: How did Japanese Churches reconstruct themselves?

A: Everybody . . .

Q: Who was the minister at that time?

A: Rev. Takeda.

Q: How was the attitude of whites towards you after the war?

A: _____America is, after all, great. If this were in Japan, I don't hesitate to look down on Japanese, 'cause they lost the war. But I don't think I saw similar attitudes in Americans. Once I thought about it.

Q: How was the process of education of your children?

A: Really nothing in particular, except I did want to help them finish high school at least.

Q: How did you find house? Job?

A: _____

Q: Anybody help you?

A: The Shinodas (Shimodas) were also doing farmwork after the war. He used to help me a lot.

Q: What was the most difficult experience you had during this time?

A: The most difficult experience -- my wife was ill in bed for quite a long time --

Q: As a Christian what is your hope for the future?

A: In those days a lot of guys were in drinking, and gambling as well.

Rev. Sato baptized me.

The guys talked down on me saying, "Yamamoto got watered!"

Suzuki, the man from Shizuoka-ken, influenced me a lot.

He looked after me very well.

Q: Do you have some hope as a Christian?

A: I do not have any hope as such. However, I owe a lot to (?), the fact that I'm still in a good health, and that's probably because I didn't drink nor smoke ever since I was young. When I come to think of it, it was really a meaningful thing that I have affiliated to a religion, Christianity. All the other guys that I came with passed away, all of them, a long time ago; drinking and gambling. There were quite a number of (?), but I'm the only one that's left alive in America. Thanks to God.

(He never said don't drink nor don't smoke --Toshi)

-end-